



# **LEADERS of INDIA**

by

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## FOREWORD

In Europe and America there exists a wealth of pamphlet and booklet literature that is in striking contrast to its scantiness in India. During my visits to these continents, I was greatly impressed by the part that such brochures play in moulding public opinion—ranging in variety from partisan political tracts, to more objective discussions on literary or scientific topics. In fact, leading political parties in the West, have their own specialised departments for their preparation and publication. To these may be added institutions like the Royal Institute of International Affairs in England and the Foreign Policy Association in the United States, whose chief concern is to supply factual data on current international questions.

The rise of the Pamphlet and the Booklet as a powerful weapon for the spread of ideas has been truly remarkable. The Pamphlet marched to power in the wake of the extension of the franchise, compulsory education and the growth of democratic institutions. With a greatly increased electorate, the need for what Disraeli called, "educating our masters", became keenly felt. In India, one finds very little literature of this type of comparable interest.

The VANGUARD BOOKLETS are an attempt to meet this need. The idea is to publish every few weeks a booklet on a subject of topical or special interest, having regard to present day controversies and their bearing on the future. Each booklet will be written by a noted authority in that field. The series will not be restricted to political questions only. Every title will be published in a pleasing format, at a price within the reach of all.

LEADERS OF INDIA forms the first of the Vanguard Booklets. Three of these sketches have already appeared, and the kind reception given to them has encouraged the writer to publish a few more. The sketches of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and M. A. Jinnah have been deliberately omitted from the first list, as so much has been written on them lately, but they may form the subject of a future volume.

**YUSUF MEHERALLY.**

## ABUL KALAM AZAD

MOULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD represents the now all too rare type of Muslim savant who flourished at the courts of Delhi. Very deeply read in the philosophies of the East and West, he has shaped the nationalist movements even outside India, by the power of his pen. His Arabic writings have affected the history of Egypt and Afghanistan and his name is respected wherever the Arabic and Persian tongues are read and spoken. He may justly be compared to the pre-Revolution philosophers of France—the Encyclopaedists.

Like his reputation, his personality also has been truly international. Born in Mecca in 1888, his early education was completed at the famous Al Azhar University at Cairo. At the age of 15 he had acquired a remarkable grasp over the Persian and Arabic languages and was so learned in Muslim theology and philosophy that he was looked upon as something of a prodigy. His father, who was a well-known scholar and author, was also an important religious head. He left India after the stirring experiences of the Great Rebellion of 1857 and travelled through Iraq, Turkey, Palestine, Egypt and the other countries of the Middle-East, having a large number of disciples in each one of these countries. When he died in India in 1908 it was expected that his brilliant son would pick up the threads and like

the Aga Khan make himself a powerful religious leader.

Abul Kalam, however, had come under the influence of modern science and literature and decided not to set himself up as a religious chief. His travels had given him a wider perspective and he resolved to draw the Muslim masses away from the barbed-wire fencing of dogma with which they had been surrounded all the time. With this purpose, he started in 1912, an Urdu paper—*Al Hilal*, and selected 'AZAD' as his pen-name. As was to be expected, the journal created a furore. It was a new departure in journalism and from one end of the country to the other it became the centre of controversy. The old type Muslim leaders were shocked both at the paper's radicalism and the powerful attack it made on tradition. Threats of murder were given to the young Editor. Few papers in the history of Indian journalism, have exercised an influence compared to that of *Al Hilal*. The powerful assaults bore fruit, for in 1913, the Muslim League which was so long trying to keep Muslims away from politics and well protected in the fold of the foreign Government, changed its creed and began to speak in the language of understandable politics.

The Government also felt profoundly disturbed at this new force. The Great War gave them the opportunity. The Defence of India Act was enforced. "*Al Hilal*" was the one paper that went on pouring out fearless criticism of Government policy. The "*Pioneer*" of Allahabad, an exponent

of the official point of view, was in hysterics about the writings of "*Al Hilal*". Questions were raised in the House of Commons. Ultimately the security of the paper was forefeited and a fresh demand of ten thousand rupees was made. The "*Al Hilal*" ceased publication. But Abul Kalam was not to be so easily defeated. He started another paper, "*Al Balagh*". This was too much for the powers that be. He was prohibited from entering the provinces of Punjab, Delhi, United Provinces, C. P., Bombay and later, even Bengal, his headquarters. Subsequently, in 1916 he was interned at Ranchi in Bihar and charged with revolutionary activity. This made him all the more powerful. He had brought about a new orientation in Muslim opinion. A few months after he was interned, the Congress and the Muslim League came to an understanding and the historical Congress-League Pact was made at Lucknow in the same year.

Abul Kalam was released in January 1920 after four years of restraint and straightaway plunged into the Khilafat and the Non-Co-operation Movements. He took prominent part in the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales and was again arrested with C. R. Das on 10th January 1921 and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Released in the beginning of 1923 he was immediately elected President of the Indian National Congress and presided over its special Session at Delhi in September of that year. He was then only 35 years old and not before nor since has any leader become President of that august body at

so early an age. Jawaharlal was 39 when he was elected President. Since that date Abul Kalam Azad has maintained a supreme position in the politics of the Congress, and his election as President of the Congress for a second term is a fitting tribute to his great services.

Abul Kalam Azad stands for a united India of Hindus and Muslims on the basis of a rational approach to common problems. To him the problem of understanding between the two as it exists, is primarily a matter of cultural adjustment. He is in favour of adopting the Latin script for Indian languages.

Neither by temperament nor by conviction is he a Gandhi-ite, but he has been Gandhi's closest ally and friend since 1920. He is the most radical among the old guard of politicians and generally speaking, has among them, the most correct social sympathies.

He has remained, however, outside the pale of being a national idol, for he is no mass leader. His chief handicap is his scholarly temperament and love of books and also of the good things of life. He loves the quiet of his library rather than the hectic life of an active man of affairs. But he is seen at his best in a Committee. There the rare powers of his mind are seen in all their eminence. In a way he is the link between the old and the new forces that are continually struggling for mastery in the Congress and it is no mean tribute to his abilities that his advice is sought by two such completely different leaders.

of modern India as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal. He is, moreover, a powerful speaker, one of the most gifted and finished orators in the whole of India. It is a treat to watch him unfold a problem. He has held meetings of the All-India Congress Committee as well as huge audiences spell-bound by the unbroken flow of reasoned argument and impassioned oratory.

Azad has stood all along for a rational outlook. But by temperament he lacks the perseverance so necessary for a successful politician. Even more fatal is his total lack of ambition. He continues to be in politics, because he simply cannot help it, because his friends will not leave him alone. When C. R. Das died, a terrible gap was created in the public life of Bengal. The obvious man who could have filled it at the time, was Abul Kalam Azad, but he obstinately refused to step in. Gandhiji himself travelled all the way to Calcutta, among other things, to tackle him. It was suggested that he should agree to become Mayor of Calcutta, the President of the Provincial Congress Committee and, if he so desired, also the Leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bengal Legislative Council. But the Moulana rejected the Triple Crown and nothing could induce him to change his mind. He preferred instead to devote his time to writing a commentary on the Koran, which when published became a best seller in the entire Muslim world and is as authoritative a piece of criticism as Tilak's famous book on the text of the Gita.

His love of music is refreshing and his range of conversation is as wide as it is varied. Russia and Spain, America and the Far East, Egyptology and historic research in the Middle Eastern cradle of civilization, all these he discusses with an encyclopædic sweep. Such men are rare in any country and very rare indeed in the India of to-day.

## RAJENDRA PRASAD

WHEN Babu Rajendra Prasad left his practice to join the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1920, he had exactly Rs. 15 left in his bank account. At the Patna High Court he was known to have been making several thousands every year. His reputation as a lawyer was so high that there was a talk of his being elevated to the Bench. But what he earned as a legal practitioner, he spent freely. Very little of it was spent on himself, for he has always been a man of simple habits and fewer needs. His earnings were spent in financing the expenses of public life or in assisting needy students to complete their education.

He stands for what Gandhi stands for, and not so much for the letter of the law as the spirit. The association of the two has been of the closest and goes back to the days when the Mahatma had just returned to India from South Africa and was still without a large and effective following. Rajendra Prasad was, in fact, the first leading political figure in the Eastern provinces to join forces with him.

This was at Champaran in Rajendra Prasad's own province of Bihar. The conditions of life and work on the indigo plantations were bad in the extreme and Gandhiji went there on behalf of the down-trodden "coolies". His activities soon brought upon him the wrath of the officials

and he was served with an order to quit the province in 24 hours. He defied the order and a prosecution was launched. This started a great agitation. The Government, not having bargained for all this, soon climbed down, withdrew the prosecution and appointed an Inquiry Committee with Gandhiji as one of its members. Its report vindicated his position and resulted in the Champaran Agrarian Act, 1918, which granted appreciable benefit to the people. Rajendra Prasad at the time, forgetting the law courts, became his right hand man, and in the Mahatma's Autobiography will be found a touching tribute to his work and devotion. Together they collected no less than seven thousand statements from the working population, the whole together forming a chronicle as real as it was pathetic. Champaran was the first feather in the Mahatma's cap and it had another far-reaching result—Rajendra Prasad became a permanent liegeman of Gandhi.

The Non-Co-operation Movement made Rajendra Prasad the undisputed leader of Bihar. His versatility and constructive genius were now seen in their full measure. The Congress had called upon the student community to boycott Government controlled education. Large numbers of them left their schools and colleges. What were they to do next? Rajendra Prasad who was then a member of the Senate and Syndicate of the Patna University resigned from both and established the National University—Bihar Vidyapith, to which were affiliated 650 institutions with 62,000

students. As the Vice-Chancellor of this great attempt at national education, he was its guiding spirit. The Vidyapith became a valuable recruiting ground for national workers and in the recent Civil Disobedience Movement, the heavy hand of Government repression fell upon this institution and it was declared illegal.

It was not, however, till the terrible earthquake on the 15th of January, 1934 which laid a large part of Bihar desolate, that Rajendra Prasad's great capacity for organisation and administration were seen at their best. He was then in jail. Repeated terms of prison life had completely shattered his health. Caught in the grip of chronic Asthma, his condition became so serious that a special Medical Board appointed by the Government, recommended his immediate release. He had spent this time fourteen months in prison. He was released two days after the earthquake. Unmindful of his health he immediately proceeded to organise the Bihar Central Relief Committee, of which he was elected Chairman. The spectacle of the leader, worn out in body and mind, practically on the verge of death, setting aside the stern warnings of his doctors and rushing to the succour of the stricken people, thrilled the whole country. An All-India Fund, named after Rajendra Prasad was started. Officialism not to be outdone started another fund, named after the Viceroy. In a few weeks the Rajendra Prasad Fund totalled twenty-eight lakhs, not to mention the huge quantity of medical requisites, grain, etc.

that were received in kind. The Viceroy's Fund to which the Princes, Capitalists and the great ones of the country rallied, exceeded it by a few lakhs only. With this amount and the assistance of hundreds of public workers, Rajendra Prasad struggled to reconstruct the affected parts of the Province. The story of his work reads like an epic. Later, when the Congress permitted acceptance of Ministerial Offices in the Provinces, great efforts were made to persuade Rajendra Prasad to agree to become Prime Minister of Bihar, but with his customary selflessness he passed on all the Cabinet posts to his lieutenants.

When still a student at Calcutta, Rajendra Prasad had attended the 22nd Session of the Congress at Calcutta in 1906. It was presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji and Rajendra Prasad was one of the many volunteers. Twentyeight years later, he was called upon by the unanimous vote of the Congress to preside over that great institution.

The years of his college life were full of excitement. The agitation to annul the Partition of Bengal was at its height and the arrogant diplomacy of Lord Curzon, the most brilliant and the most erratic Viceroy Great Britain ever sent to India, roused the whole country to resistance. Rajendra Prasad's sensitive mind eagerly responded to the rapid changes and tension in the political situation. When still in his eighteenth year, he was largely instrumental in the formation in 1902 of the Beharee Club in Calcutta. Four years later,

owing to his untiring efforts, the first session of the Bihar Students' Conference met in Patna in 1906.

There is scarcely any other public man in India who has had as brilliant an academic career as Dr. Rajendra Prasad. He has filled with distinction the posts of Professor of English Literature and then Professor of History and Economics and later taught at the Law College. When still a student he created quite a flutter by winning the first place in the Entrance Examination. Calcutta University at that time serviced not only Bengal, but also the Provinces of Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Burma. No non-Bengalee had till then obtained the coveted place and it was left to Rajendra Prasad to break the record. He repeated his performances in succeeding examinations. Gokhale, at that time, attracted by his unusual brilliance, invited him to join the Servants of India Society. Rajendra Prasad was enthusiastic, but was prevented from doing so by the expostulations of his family members, especially of his elder brother to whom he was greatly attached. But the fact that even at that young age, when the glittering prizes of life were opening out before him, he should have agreed to forego them all, and become a humble public servant, speaks volumes for his love of country.

In 1935 the Indian National Congress completed fifty years of life and its Golden Jubilee was celebrated amidst great enthusiasm during his term as President. He himself had been a Member

of the All India Congress Committee since 1912 and a Member of the Working Committee from 1922, as also General Secretary of the Congress. Once again in 1939, in the atmosphere of grim controversy, he was prevailed upon to shoulder the onerous duties of President, when Subhas Bose, a few weeks after his re-election to the highest office, resigned owing to differences with the majority group in the Congress, at the fateful Calcutta meeting of the A. I. C. C.

Unlike so many other Indian leaders Rajendra Babu did not go out of India till he was 44. In 1928, a Privy Council appeal from Burma furnished the opportunity. He visited several of the leading European countries, and met quite a number of celebrities. On his return, he published his impressions in a little book. Not all his experiences were uniformly pleasant. At Graz in Austria, he accepted an invitation to a pacifist meeting where he intended to explain India's strategy of non-violent resistance. The meeting was broken up by a gang of anti-pacifists and Rajendra Babu sustained severe injuries, which disabled him for quite some time.

Rajendra Prasad is generally regarded as the great Gentleman of Indian Politics. There is something captivating about his personality and manners. Among Mahatma Gandhi's principal lieutenants, he is personally the most popular. Although so great in the country's politics, he has not a single enemy. A man of austere simplicity, he travels third class, and in his life has identified

himself with the poorest in the land. He stays often in his village home of Ziradia in the Saran District of Bihar. His family had come to the village from the historic vicinity of Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra, at one time the Capital City of the Moghul Empire under the great Akbar. A homely speaker, in spite of his learning, he can talk to the people in a language that they can understand. There is no rhetoric about his speeches, no effort at phrase-making. He talks straight from the heart and carries his point by sheer force of sincerity and lucid argument. Of a philosophic and religious disposition, the note of exaltation can be clearly perceived in his speeches.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad speaks seven languages. His early education was received at the feet of a Muslim divine and the first languages he learnt were Persian and Urdu. He is of course a master of the Hindi language, having been also President of the All India Hindi Sahitya Sabha.

In controversy—and there have been several in which he has been involved during thirty years of public activity, he usually shows unfailing courtesy and a desire to understand the opposite point of view. But Rajendra Prasad has not shown of late years, a proper appreciation of the rise of the Kisan Movement in his own Zamindari ridden province of Bihar, where the peasantry is about the most oppressed in the whole country. The Bihar peasant pays one of the highest rates of land-rent in India, and since this is a principal

cause of debt the figures of rural indebtedness in Bihar are also the highest.

Rajendra Prasad is only fiftysix years old, but his weak health is a continual source of national anxiety. Scholar, lawyer, administrator, educationist, village worker, mass organiser, no party leader has shown a greater sense of disinterested service and selfless devotion.

## VALLABHBHAI PATEL

NEXT to the Mahatma, Vallabhbhai Patel is the most dominant figure in Indian politics. This is not to say that he is next also in popularity or power of intellect or breadth of vision. Far from it. His personal popularity is not a fraction of Jawaharlal's; in intellectual power he is miles behind Rajagopalachari; and as for vision, I wonder if he has heard of such a thing at all. But he is the ablest organiser in India and the most ruthless. With his own hands he has created and built up a powerful political machine, that has not only broken numerous political opponents, but has more than once baffled the skilful foreign bureaucracy and filled it with grave apprehensions for the future. Till recently, as the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, he virtually controlled the Congress Ministries in the seven Provinces of India. Prime Ministers as well as other leading Congressmen looked up to him with a mixture of respect and fear.

The sixtytwo years of his life have been full of strenuous endeavour and ceaseless strife. He has made big decisions and stuck to them. Perhaps the biggest was to throw in his lot with Gandhi. This was not easy for him. At the time when Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa and made Ahmedabad his headquarters, Vallabhbhai was a flourishing barrister. At the

Ahmedabad Club where all the lawyers congregated, the Mahatma was the running topic of amusement. There appeared something comic about a mild-mannered ex-barrister hurling defiance at the mighty British Empire with the weapons of truth and non-violent resistance. Vallabhbhai freely joined in making fun of the Mahatma. When Gandhiji on one occasion ventured in the Ahmedabad Club to explain his ideas there, Vallabhbhai completely ignored him and sat in one corner of the house playing cards with a sarcastic smile playing on his lips.

Vallabhbhai's decision to join forces with Mahatma Gandhi came as a surprise for not a few of his associates. He was not a man who was likely to be swept off his feet. His past was a witness to that. With unfaltering steps and amazing determination he had made his way to the front. As a schoolboy he had been the despair of all his teachers and had to change schools repeatedly, for no teacher could curb his rebellious spirits. Education completed, he set up as a lawyer. He had a marked preference for criminal cases. The intricacies of the Civil Law left him cold. He was at his best defending cases of murder, dacoity and loot. Soon his name became a terror even for the judiciary. To escape him the Resident Magistrate's Court was shifted from Borsad to Anand and when Vallabhbhai set up practice in Anand, the Court was again transferred to Borsad!

He had set his heart on qualifying for the Bar. When he was able to save enough money he made the trip to England and devoted himself with characteristic fury to his studies. At school he had been an indifferent student, but he had no difficulty in obtaining a first-class and topping the list of successful candidates in the Bar Examination. His perseverance and industry are reserved for the most significant occasions. As soon as the examination was over, he left for India, not stopping to visit any European country. That was not a part of his purpose and Vallabhbhai has no intellectual curiosity.

It was not the spell of the doctrine, but the fascination of the man that attracted Vallabhbhai to Gandhi. Gujerat was in the backwaters of Indian politics and Gandhi's bold and unequivocal lead was creating quite a stir. Himself a strong man, the tremendous self-assurance of the Mahatma made a great impression on Vallabhbhai and when Gandhiji had sketched out a programme that was both practical and militant, Vallabhbhai joined him. From that moment he increasingly relieved Gandhi of his routine work and made himself an indispensable lieutenant. He toured from village to village carrying the message of his master and built up organisations which took part in peasant struggles. The most remarkable of these was the No-Tax Campaign at Bardoli in 1928. The whole nation watched the peasants under the leadership of Vallabhbhai resisting all the repression that a powerful Government could

think of and when the victory was won, Vallabhbhai leapt into All India fame. He led the Civil Disobedience Movement in Gujerat in 1930 and carried it to heights of tension that resulted in the resignations of hundreds of Government servants and an atmosphere of resistance that British rule had never faced before. A grateful nation showered on him the highest honour in their power. He was made the President of the Indian National Congress. When Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed in 1932 he was arrested along with Gandhi and detained without trial for the best part of two years.

Though a follower of Gandhi, he differs in many ways from his illustrious leader. A realist and a practical politician, his emphasis is generally different. A man of puritanical habits, he has not much interest in religion. While Gandhiji has based his philosophy on the teachings of the Gita and has even written a commentary on that sacred book, till recently Vallabhbhai did not even read it. While Gandhi is preoccupied with his experiments with truth, Vallabhbhai's interests are essentially this-worldly. He has a flare for organisation. He expects implicit obedience. Temperamentally he cannot stand any opposition or independence of thought in others. Either one agrees with him and is incorporated in his machine or one disagrees with him and is sent to the wall. He has ruthlessly,

but tactfully eliminated opponents out of his path.

Vallabhbhai lacks integrated outlook. His philosophy of life, apart from its Gandhian code, is essentially empirical. He rarely bothers to think out things to their first principles. He is mainly interested in practical work and has evolved a technique of getting things done and that is, a loyal and devoted machine with himself as its presiding authority.

A man of rugged simplicity, he is personally immune from the influence of money. He has sacrificed his all in the country's interests. But he knows money is power. He has no illusions about the capitalists that swarm round him, but he believes that they are less of a nuisance inside than outside the Congress. He knows their value and also their price and thinks it worth his while to pay it. He lacks a clear social philosophy and had some of the politician's contempt for the masses—an attitude that has been modified, but not eliminated, through his contact with Gandhi.

While a number of Gandhi's lieutenants have been more interested in pushing forward his constructive programme which consists of items like Prohibition, removal of untouchability, spread of Khaddar, etc., Vallabhbhai reserves his energies for political matters. Once Gandhi determines a "line", Vallabhbhai employs his tremendous capacity to carry it through. When Gandhi was for the boycott of Legislative Councils, Vallabhbhai

fought with tenacity for that view against Das, the elder Nehru, and his brother, Vithalbhai Patel. When Gandhi decided for Council Entry programme, Vallabhbhai took charge of parliamentary work and with great efficiency guided the new experiment.

From his humble village home, Vallabhbhai has travelled the hard road to fame. His family history provides several clues to his own character. The Kaira District of Gujarat where he was born is famous for its Robin Hood traditions. And his father was himself a typical representative of that tradition. When the great rebellion of 1857 broke out he went all the way from Gujarat to fight against the British. On another occasion, he was taken prisoner by a ruling chief and ushered into the great man's presence, while he was absorbed in a game of chess. His sagacious advice about the moves of the pawns earned him the good-will of the chief and ultimately also his freedom. His elder brother, Vithalbhai Patel, an illustrious name in politics, was the first Indian to become President of the Legislative Assembly. When Civil Disobedience started he resigned the office to take his place in prison.

Vallabhbhai has in abundant measure the courage and intrepidity of his father and the resourcefulness of his brother.

Vallabhbhai is undoubtedly to-day the leader of the Right Wing in the Congress. He is certainly the biggest stick the constitutionalists have, to beat the Congress Socialists. Though it is

Vallabhbhai who has largely created the constitutional machine and presides over it with such autocratic efficiency, he is no tame constitutionalist himself. Moderatism, no doubt, has come with age. Also a desire to call a halt and consolidate the territory won. But he dearly loves a battle, and his most distinguishing quality is his nerves. Years ago when he was still practising, he was on his legs in Court arguing a case. In the midst of the argument a telegram was handed to him. It announced the death of his wife. Vallabhbhai read the telegram, and quietly continued with his interrupted argument, as if nothing had been the matter. No one had an inkling of the news or what was going on inside him. The news only went out when the Court adjourned for the day. The same fortitude belongs to him to-day, and makes him so feared.

His qualities of leadership are indeed great. But they are of the consolidator, never of the pioneer blazing the trail. That was left to Gandhi. It has not been given to him to see the distant scene; one step has always been enough for him.

## SUBHAS BOSE

SUBHAS BOSE has always been the great disturber of the conservative world. His life has been an invitation to rebellion. In his under-graduate days, he was rusticated from College for the best part of two years, for leading a students' strike and attempting to thrash an English Professor, who had dared to insult Indians. Even before that date, without notice to anybody, he left home all on his own, in search of salvation. A few years after he threw up a coveted government post and resigned from the Indian Civil Service, without a thought for the morrow. Later in jail, affected by dreaded tuberculosis, which threatened his very life, he scorned release, because the foreign government presumed to make it conditional. Better the remote Burma prison and slow death than freedom with a condition!

There is a quality, that in ordinary folk is known as obstinacy, but when possessed by the great, is called strength. Subhas possesses this in a fair measure. He acquired it while still very young, in the prayer-carpet atmosphere of his home. His father, Janki Nath Bose, made good money as a flourishing lawyer at Cuttack, even as his brother, Sarat Chandra, does to-day at Calcutta. It was the mother's sincere and intense religious devotion that fired Subhas's childhood imagination. The teachings of Ramakrishna

Paramhansa and Vivekanand were the rage of Young Bengal at the time. Their intellectualised interpretation of Hinduism, emancipated from the tyranny of ritualistic theology, has been a landmark in the growth of Indian philosophical thought, and Subhas imbibing their ideas at flood-time, resolved to dedicate his life to the great cause.

The decision was not taken without great hesitation but once it was taken, nothing could come in the way. He stole away from his house on one quiet night in 1914 without informing his parents. Feeling like a new Buddha forsaking family, the comforts he was accustomed to, the certain prospects of a brilliant career, young Subhas started in search of the Master, who would resolve his doubts and supply his disturbed and restless mind with a new synthesis. While Jawaharlal at that age was still fresh from the playfields of Harrow and was applying himself to the study of Zoology, Biology and Chemistry at Trinity College, Cambridge, Subhas betook himself to the Himalayas, the traditional home of Indian spirituality.

The place of the Himalayas in Indian life still awaits investigation at the hands of Indian Sociologists. About its fauna and flora, its influence on climate and physical geography we know. But with the exception of E. B. Havell, no eminent scholar has attempted to evaluate the profound debt that Indian philosophy and art owe to them. Even Jawaharlal, who has never suffered from

religious exaltation, records in his *Autobiography*, that one of his still unfulfilled ambitions in life is to visit Mount Kailasa, the Himalaya Abode of the Gods.

It was lucky for the future of Indian politics, that Subhas only met bad coin in his wanderings in the Himalayas. None of the "holy" men that he saw had the image of the Master. A trifle disappointed, he descended into the plains and wandered along the sacred banks of the Ganges, visiting one holy city after another, from Mathura to Brindaban and Benares to Gaya, with no better luck. Disillusioned and worn out in body and mind, he was taken seriously ill. A kindly soul, learning about his identity, telegraphed to his distracted father. The anguished family, who had no news about him all these months, lost no time, and Subhas found himself back in Calcutta. He had wandered far and wide, met doctor and saint and heard great argument, but in the end, like *Omar Khayyam*, had come out by the same door as in he went.

When the Non-Co-operation Movement started Subhas was in the Indian Civil Service. Through the intervention of Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, he had been able to secure admission into the Scottish Churches College, after nearly two years of rustication. He took his B.A., in the First Class with Philosophy. Subsequently both at Cambridge and in the I.C.S., distinction had met him more

than half way. He returned to India covered with honours to face the new life.

The Non-Co-operation Movement swept over the country like a gigantic tidal wave. Nothing since the great Rebellion of 1857 had so stirred the masses of the people. The Congress issued a call to lawyers to quit the courts, to title-holders to relinquish their titles, to students to leave their colleges, to Government servants to resign. Tagore renounced his knighthood. C. R. Das left his magnificent practice at the Bar, hundreds of students came out of colleges and schools. Subhas could hold himself in no longer. What was his duty? How could he continue in the service of a Government whom Gandhi had denounced as satanic? The question-mark troubled him. He disregarded the entreaty of friends and family and resigned from the I.C.S.

The association of Subhas Bose with C. R. Das started from that day and continued till the news of that great leader's death reached Subhas in the Mandalay Jail. Subhas utterly broke down. The rebel who had dared the might of Britain, sobbed like a child.

For something very material from his life had passed away. It was at the instance of Deshbandhu Das that he had taken up the Principalship of the National College, after his resignation from the I.C.S. He had followed the leader to the Gaya Congress and supported his fight for the entry into legislatures. When Das started the daily "*Forward*" at Calcutta, to push ahead with

the propaganda of the Swaraj Party, Subhas became editor of the journal. In 1924, when following the Congress victory, Das became the Mayor of Calcutta, he insisted on Subhas becoming the Chief Executive Officer. The ties between the two were very close.

The death of C. R. Das had another important result for Subhas. Das was the only major political leader on whom he had relied. Before or since, he has not found it possible to give his political allegiance to any other personality, to the same degree. From that day, Subhas has stood alone. Since the time he has faced many conflicts. The story of his differences with the late Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta is well known, and that difference very adversely affected Bengal politics for the best part of a decade. It is a tribute to Subhas's sincerity and charm that he should have won over to-day so many of Sen Gupta's associates.

In and out of prison, public affairs have been his only care. He has been President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. He has likewise been President of the All India Union Congress. That stormy session will long be remembered, for it marked a breach between the two leading sections in it, which happily is now bridged up.

Jail life, while it has repeatedly damaged his health, has also given him leisure for reflection. Travels abroad have helped to build a broader and wider perspective. He has arrived where he is over the hard road. That signifies that he has

had the courage to espouse unpopular causes. At the end of it he has arrived at Socialist conclusions. His earlier lyrical nationalism has ripened into a considered philosophy of life.

Subhas brings to questions a refreshing force of mind and downrightness of speech. But above all it is his great powers of organisation that have helped him through times of difficulty and are to-day an asset of the nation. No one in India has better understood the need of building up organisation as an aid to the spread of ideas than Subhas, unless it is Gandhiji. Jawaharlal somehow has never much worried about it. He possesses too much intellectual detachment to become an enthusiastic Party leader. Subhas on the other hand knows the value of an efficient Party machine and has always striven to have one ready at hand.

It was therefore to be expected that immediately after resigning the Presidentship of the Congress, Subhas would form a new party of his own. He lost no time, and the Forward Bloc was organised. Born in controversy, the party functions amidst unusual heat and conflict. But Subhas has a genius of thriving amidst storms.

## SAROJINI NAIDU

THERE is something of oriental magic about Sarojini Naidu. Born at another period in Indian history, she would have been more concerned with her exquisite and delicately perfumed verses, than with the rough and tumble of politics. In the India of to-day, so gifted and sensitive a personality, feeling acutely her country's humiliation under foreign rule, could not possibly take to the Ivory Tower.

She is the most cosmopolitan of India's political leaders. For that reason she has no patience with the "my-country-right-or-wrong" variety of patriotism. Hers is a nationalism that readily flows into the broad international current. A decade or two ago a tendency was fashionable here of always harking back to India's "Glorious Past", and deriving from antiquity thus made golden, all the sources of inspiration and future progress. She raised her voice of protest against these isolating trends. Each differing culture pattern, according to her, has its own peculiar gifts and functions, and the fruits of each civilization should be available to the whole world. India, while she should be very mindful of the native blossom, must not remain aloof and apart from the invigorating influence of the new political, scientific and cultural developments of

the West. It is a happy sign that her view-point is getting an increasing number of adherents.

No cause is dearer to her than of promoting a closer understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims. No one certainly is better qualified to be the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. Mrs. Naidu has an admirable understanding of this question, and has always steered clear of communal currents. More than most Congress leaders she has been able to win the confidence of the Muslims. When the communal tension was at its highest some years ago, Moulana Shaukat Ali remarked that Mrs. Naidu was the only Hindu in whom Indian Muslims had confidence.

Her work for the Women's Movement is well-known. She has fought against purdah, child-Marriage, and other old customs that have outlived their usefulness. She has never asked for special treatment for women. She wants them to be self-reliant and stand with men as equal partners in India's fight for freedom. And she has played a great part in the fight for their emancipation. Her repeated terms of imprisonment and her fighting lead have done more to improve their condition than all the sermons of social workers in India during the past half a century.

Leadership comes to her naturally, automatically. The essential reasons of course are, her really first-class brains, wide and tolerant sympathies and a great desire to do justice to the other person's point of view. She is also a

magnificent orator, and speaks with ease in several languages.

These qualities were seen in her quite early in life. She was fortunately born and her father, Dr. Aghori Nath Chattpadhyaya was a Doctor of Science of Edinburgh University. His love of scientific research led him to found the Nizam College at Hyderabad, of which he became the Principal. Her mother wrote dainty poems in the Bengali language. This was a rich heritage indeed.

Her earliest recollection is of having received a beating from her father for a mistake in speaking English in conversation. The conversation at home was being carried on always in English. She was then six years old!

At the age of twelve, the country was startled to learn, that Sarojini Chattpadhyaya had been successful in the Matriculation Examination of the Madras University. Such a thing had never happened before. But then a year earlier she had surprised her parents by writing a poem, while apparently trying to do a sum in Algebra. When she was just thirteen she wrote a long story poem, thirteen hundred lines in all, in just six days and followed it up with a drama of two thousand lines. Her health had now completely broken down and she was ordered complete rest. She was sent to England in 1895 when scarcely sixteen years old and joined the King's College in London and later Girton College at Cambridge. She returned to India in 1898 and in the same year married Dr. Govind Rajula Naidu. While she belonged to a

high class Brahmin family her husband was a non-Brahmin. But then, as now, Mrs. Naidu has never bothered about differences of caste, colour and creed.

She first achieved fame as a poetess, and her "*Golden Threshold*" and "*Bird of Time*" received high praise. Edmund Gosse, the eminent English critic, sharply drew her attention to the fact that she was writing as if she were an Englishwoman —the Indian atmosphere was weak and that if she persisted it would be at the expense of freshness and originality. This lesson she took to heart with beneficial results.

Her spirit could not find full satisfaction in poetry, and she stepped on to the political landscape. She was present at the Lucknow Congress in 1916 and subsequently took an active part in the Home Rule Movement. From that time she has been in the thick of the political battle. In 1925 she was elected President of the Indian National Congress. Three years later, she toured the United States of America to put the Indian point of view. In the following year she was elected to preside over the South African Indian National Congress.

After the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and Abbas Tyabji, she was placed in supreme charge of the Civil Disobedience Movement, and was arrested under dramatic circumstances while leading the salt raids at Dharasana. Also imprisoned in 1932, she received a setback in health, that threatens to be permanent.

Mrs. Naidu is, without doubt, the best hostess in India. In her drawing room at the Taj Mahal Hotel one meets with all varieties of persons with equal chances of running into a Maharajah or a fire-eating Socialist.

Her most remarkable quality is her unfailing sense of humour. Equally remarkable is her inordinate love of Gossip. The joke is all over the country that Mrs. Naidu lives on two meals of food each day and three meals of gossip. There is no more effective way of giving currency to interesting news than to talk about it in Madame Naidu's drawing room.

No leader of the Old Guard—she has been on the Congress Working Committee for many years now—commands such popularity with the youth or understands it so well. Mrs. Naidu once expressed the wish that after her demise the following words should be inscribed on her cenotaph: "She loved the youth of India". At 61 Madame Sarojini Naidu feels as young as her daughters.

## ABDUL GAFFAR KHAN

KHAN ABDUL GAFFAR KHAN's life has been an essay in renunciation. Twice the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress was offered to him, and both times he declined on the plea that he was not worthy to occupy so exalted an office. Born in affluence and reared up in luxury, he is now leading an almost ascetic life. He has given up even such minor pleasures as drinking tea, of which he was fond once. His life is patterned after the Mahatma and throughout the length and breadth of the country, he is popularly known as the "Frontier Gandhi".

Khan signifies the leader of a clan. Gaffar Khan's father, Behram Khan, was Chief of an Utmanzai village, right on the borderland of India, in the Peshawar District. That is how the first Khan in his name also comes in, in addition to the customary suffix. His brother, Dr. Khan Saheb, his companion in arms and like himself a confirmed jail-bird, was till the Congress Ministries resigned all over India, the Prime Minister of the Frontier Province.

While still at the Aligarh University, young Gaffar Khan was profoundly influenced by the political writings of Moulana Abul Kalam Azad. That gifted writer's paper, *Al Hilal* was quite a rage at this time. The Moulana held up a new ideal before his community, and in brilliant and

defiant prose assailed the political shibboleths of the great ones of the Muslim League. Gaffar Khan carried the impress of the new ideas into his province, and set about organising his people. Opportunity came when the agitation against the Rowlatt Act was started. So great was his power at this early age, that thousands attended his meetings. After one such meeting, at which his old father, nearing ninety, was also present, Gaffar Khan was arrested and imprisoned without a trial. There the Police Chief led a deputation to persuade him to desist from such disturbing activities. The Police Chief's solicitude was understandable, for Gaffar Khan's grandfather had fought in the Rebellion of 1857, on the side of the British. But the young Khan was adamant. Subsequently the Government arrested his aged father also, who from staunch loyalty to British rule, had travelled all the way to extremism, under his son's influence.

The jail life was a new experience. He was constantly kept in fetters that were too small for him, and which hurt him all the time. But he kept very cheerful, and tried to influence the life of all those that were around him. He started preaching communal amity and opened classes in which he explained the leading ideas of both the Koran and the Gita.

The Non-Co-operation and the Khilafat Movements were in full progress when he was released from prison, and Gaffar Khan took a prominent part in both. He had already developed

a great interest in National Education and along with the celebrated Haji of Turangzai, had built up a net-work of national schools all over the Frontier Province. The Haji Saheb, who later became an inveterate foe of British policy on the 'Trans-Frontier, raised the banner of revolt and gave many sleepless nights to the army command.

With the start of Civil Disobedience in 1930, a new chapter opened in the history of the Frontier Province. The patient work of the Khan brothers bore fruit and the whole province lined up with them. The jails were filled to overflowing, with thousands more ready to take their places. This was intolerable to Government who saw their most important province from the military point of view, slipping out of their hands. A reign of terror was inaugurated. The story of this repression is found in the Report of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, presided over by the late Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, who after resigning the Presidentship of the Indian Legislative Assembly, investigated this matter. The Report was proscribed by the Government, who subsequently banned several books, that attempted to give the same facts.

The Gandhi-Irwin Truce saw the Khan brothers free once more, to be imprisoned again a few months later. Even before Gandhiji had returned from England after the Round Table Conference the Frontier Ordinance was promulgated and the Khan brothers were arrested and

detained without trial. While no charges were proved, it was suggested that they were planning an armed rebellion against Government in league with the Haji of Turangzai. But the spectacle of the Pathans non-violently resisting foreign rule was itself the best refutation of the Government's charge, and seemed to inspire the whole country. Practically his whole family followed Gaffar Khan to jail—his brother, sisters, sons, nephews.

Gaffar Khan completely accepts the Gandhian philosophy. He has derived his faith in non-violence and the doctrine of love, through his study of the Koran and the Islamic scriptures and independently has reached practically the same conclusions as Gandhiji. To-day, he is the Mahatma's most devoted lieutenant.

For all his religion, he is a radical and sincerely desires independence of his country and is genuinely attached to the interests of the masses.

This great faith in religion he derives from his father, who combined enlightened views with deep piety. Gaffar Khan believes that all religions are of equal significance, and has therefore, no proselytising zeal. His allegiance is primarily to the essence of religion, and his broadmindedness and tolerance have won him general esteem.

He is to-day one of the most important figures in the politics of the country. For the past several years he has been a member of the Congress Working Committee. To have built up, along

with his brother, Dr. Khan Saheb, a powerful national movement in the strategically important province of the Frontier, is no mean achievement. By his sacrifices and example he has organised and drawn this neglected but highly significant province within the Congress orbit. Above all, he has brought within the Congress huge Muslim mass support.

His organising capacities are seen in his successful effort to wean the sturdy and warlike Pathan from the path of violence and in giving them a new consciousness of life. The powerful organisation of volunteers that he created, filled the Government with nervousness and the severest repression was not able to break it up. Government, however, did some smart propaganda work by calling them Red Shirts. It was, however, only the colour of the shirt that was red, not the ideas. Gaffar Khan called them the Khudai Khidmatgars, which means "Servants of God".

He is a man of great courage and fortitude. In prison, he learnt of the hunger strike of his nephew, who was a prisoner like himself. Gaffar Khan neither attempted to meet him or to dissuade him and the young man actually fasted for 78 days. When his condition became critical and life seemed uncertain, Gaffar Khan wrote to the Government—about the disposal of his body, in case he passed away!

He is not an orator and speaks rarely outside his own province. But the words coming from the depths of his heart never fail to make an

impression. His striking appearance gives to his magnetic personality an added element of charm. He towers over six feet and a quarter and once weighed over fifteen stones. Repeated imprisonment has worn his body and at present his weight is just a little over eleven stones, while the marks of suffering are clearly visible on his person.

In his youth, Gaffar Khan dreamed of joining the army. He was proud of his physique, confident of himself and had envisaged a successful career. But when he saw the insolent behaviour of some European officers towards their Indian colleagues he changed his plans. That decision was subsequently to change so much else besides.

## C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

IF Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan is known as the “Frontier Gandhi”, C. Rajagopalachari is called by many, the “Tamil Mahatma”. More generally, the Madras ex-Premier is referred to as just “C. R.” or Rajaji.

C. R. is, along with Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad, one of the Gandhian triumvirate. For years, he has been regarded as the Mahatma’s “authoritative interpreter” (Gandhiji’s description) and cynics and critics were referred to the chosen disciple, the Mahatma using his powers of persuasion only when “C. R.” had failed to convince. When the Mahatma was imprisoned in the Non-Co-operation Movement, the editorial responsibility of his journal, *Young India*, mainly devolved on Rajaji. When the Mahatma commenced his historic fast in September, 1932 and lay in slow agony in the prison-yard of Yerawada Jail, to secure modification in the Communal Award given by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in so far as it affected the Harijans, it was C. R.’s patient and unfailing efforts at settlement that bore fruit.

During the early nineteen-twenties, C. R. emerged as the champion of the Mahatma’s policies, while the latter was in prison. The issues came to a head at the Gaya Congress in 1922. An influential section, led by C. R. Das

and Motilal Nehru, demanded a change in Congress policy so as to allow entry into the legislatures. The Gandhi group, ably led by C. R., took up the No Change position, insisting that the boycott of legislative bodies should continue to be the prevailing Congress policy.

The year 1922 opened with political tension sky high, in expectation of Civil Disobedience. An All Parties Conference was hurriedly summoned on January 14 by neutral friends, in a last-moment effort to mediate between the Congress and the Government of India. Jinnah, Jayakar and Natarajan were the three Secretaries of the Conference, which was attended by 300 persons. Gandhiji was present informally as an observer. Lord Reading, the Viceroy, rejected the suggestions of the Conference. On February 1, Gandhiji sent a letter to the Viceroy that was both an appeal and an ultimatum, giving him seven days time, after which Civil Disobedience would commence in Bardoli. On February 5, in the obscure village of Chauri Chura, in the Gorakhpur District of U. P., occurred an incident that was to change the course of Indian history. An excited mob, during a procession, rushed a Police Sub-Inspector and 21 constables into the Police Station and set fire to it, the flames swallowing up all of them. Gandhiji was profoundly shocked and declared that the country was not ready for a *non-violent fight*. Accordingly, Civil Disobedience was stopped. An adverse reaction set in. Government immediately launched on further repression and

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Gandhiji was arrested on March 13 and sentenced to six years imprisonment. On June 7, 8, 9 the A. I. C. C. requested Hakim Ajmalkhan, the Congress President to appoint a Committee to tour round the country to report "whether Civil Disobedience in some form, or some other measure of similar character, should be adopted." The Committee reported against the starting of mass civil disobedience on a nationwide scale. On the question of entry into or boycott of legislatures, opinion was sharply divided. Hakim Ajmalkhan, Pandit Motilal Nehru and V. J. Patel favoured entry into the legislatures, Rajagopalachari, Dr. Ansari and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar were for no change and the continuance of the Boycott.

At Gaya, Rajagopalachari carried the day. Das resigned Congress Presidentship and started the Swaraj Party. A great split appeared inevitable but the release of Jawaharlal and Abul Kalam Azad from jail, helped towards readjustment. A special session of the Congress was summoned at Delhi and Abul Kalam Azad from the chair helped to bring about a compromise formula. The resolution was permissive: "Such Congressmen as have no religious or conscientious objections against entering the legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections."

But before long, History was to take sweet revenge. Fifteen years after, by a queer irony of fate, his great influence was used to carry the Congress in an opposite direction. Congress had

won a resounding victory at the polls in the General Elections in 1937 and C. R. became the chief protagonist for the acceptance by the Congress of Ministerial responsibility. The sea-green incorruptible 'Satyagrahi' who had earlier denounced legislative bodies as temples of sin, now became the first elected Prime Minister of Madras.

What is the explanation for this sharp change in one, otherwise so remarkably consistent in his life and work?

C. R. represents to-day the mood of weariness with strife, the desire to *do* something, to build. He symbolises better than any one else this new tendency in our national affairs.

Rajagopalachari was the only first rank Gandhian to become a Cabinet Minister himself. Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad preferred to be powers behind the throne. As Prime Minister he enjoyed an authority both over his colleagues and by comparison with other Ministers that was remarkable. The reasons, of course, were his intellect and character. He is the brain trust of the Gandhi group, just as Sardar Patel is its directing hand. And the simplicity of his life is noteworthy. Even when Prime Minister, he washed his own clothes. He is a most accomplished speaker, one who fully understands the value of brevity and economy of words. His writings show the same quality of compactness. One wonders sometimes how much Indian literature has lost by Rajaji taking to politics. His

Jail Diary has been translated into many of the provincial languages.

Puritanical in appearance, his face is inscrutable, and his eyes would penetrate, were they not heavily protected with dark glasses. C. R. invariably puts these on, often to the annoyance of those whom he meets, for it becomes difficult to guess what is passing in his mind.

His ambition has been to be like his master, a mediator between convention and revolt. But he does not take to new ideas easily or kindly; and in this lies a great source of future anxiety.

## SIKANDAR HYAT KHAN

FIVE years ago, a strong tug of war was going on in the Punjab. Sir Fazli Husein had resolved to organise the Unionist Party to fight the legislative elections. The scattered opposition groups were filled with apprehension and the Hindu communal groups not the least amongst them. For Sir Fazli Hussain dominated Punjab politics with his strong personality, autocratic methods, great ability and powers of organisation. Success meant the Prime Ministership of the Punjab. Even the Governor of the province feared him.

Who would come forward to make the diversion? All the moderates and officials turned to Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan. He was then the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. He was all that Sir Fazli was not. He was not so aggressively associated with Muslim communalist claims and so was more acceptable to Hindus and Sikh leaders; possessing no towering intellect, there was no fear of his dominating the political field. Easy going, good natured, pleasant in conversation, his aristocratic ways made for popularity. There was no sting and bite about him. Besides the Governor and the high officials had a definite preference for him. Sikandar Hyat was no Fazli Husain. With him as Premier, the old tradition would not be too rudely disturbed.

Sikandar at the time, however, lacked stature. He knew that it was no easy task to cross swords with so skilful an exponent of the game as Sir Fazli Husain. He quietly made peace with him and also agreed to accept a position under him. The policy proved to be wise, for Sir Fazli, already broken in health, soon succumbed to illness and with his death Sikandar became the leader of the Unionist Party, and in due course the Prime Minister of the Punjab.

Sikandar Hyat is the typical Indian land-holder—conservative, easy going, shy at new ideas, content to let things alone. With all the advantages of birth, he passed through Aligarh to the University College at London. Admitted into the Indian Army, he was attached to the Brigade Headquarters staff and was the first Indian to command a Company on active service. He saw further service on the Frontier and in the Third Afghan War. Returning to public life again, while still in his thirties, he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council from the Land-holders' Constituency.

His wealth, the reputation of being a good fellow, and above all the backing of the foreign government are the sources of his power. Sikandar Hyat has always been the Government's Good Boy. When all the political parties were unanimous in their boycott of the Simon Commission, Sikandar agreed to become Chairman of the Punjab Simon Committee. Earlier, he had co-operated with the visit of the Prince of Wales

(Duke of Windsor now) when it was boycotted by all the progressive elements in the country. He had never failed Government and the bureaucracy was not slow to show its appreciation. He was appointed Acting Governor of the Punjab for a time.

Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan stands for feudalism made modern. Too intelligent to ignore the impact of modernity, he is conservative enough to want to keep quite enough of the old order, to prevent the world he has been familiar with making too sharp a break with tradition. Essentially he stands for the interests of Property, and 's himself a land-holder turned capitalist. Left to himself he would perhaps be willing to throw in a grain or two of humanity in the sordid task. But he is the politician of the transition period and his Ministry's record with regard to civil liberties is perhaps about the worst in India.

It is significant that when Mr. Jinnah resolved to re-organise the Muslim League and appealed to the Muslims to fight the elections on the League ticket, Sikandar Hyat declined to join in. He stated that the Unionist Party, of which he was the chief, consisted of both Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and as such he could not possibly join forces with Jinnah. The result was that Jinnah's Muslim League could get only three seats in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and became something of a joke.

The decision of the Congress to accept ministerial offices, however, created a flutter. The

Non-Congress Ministries at once started feeling the pressure of progressive legislation in the Congress provinces, the enlargement of civil liberties, the relief to the peasantry and other exploited elements. The contrast was glaring. A great agitation started in the Punjab as in Bengal, asking for the release of political prisoners and relaxation of government control. Alarmed at this, Sikandar rushed into the arms of Jinnah, and made peace with him, while Fazlul-Huq the Bengal premier, feeling the pinch even more, performed wilder acrobatics.

Next to Mr. Jinnah, Sir Sikandar is the most important personality in the Muslim League. But unlike Jinnah, he has maintained some sense of proportion in communal controversies that is in refreshing contrast to the latter's outbursts. The future of the Muslim League and the relations between these two leaders remains the subject of interesting speculation. When all is said, Jinnah is undoubtedly, one of the most colourful personalities in India. His recent attitude has puzzled his friends and bewildered his admirers. But apart from political hysterics, Jinnah seems to be both Anti-Congress and Anti-Government. Sikandar on the other hand, is strongly pro-British and would not be averse to a working settlement with the Congress. How long will these two be able to continue a fruitful partnership? Should the international situation worsen appreciably, Britain will make a strong bid for Congress goodwill by trying to meet its demands, very much

more than half way. On his present showing, Jinnah will not be overpleased with this development and would in all probability resort to obstruction. Britain will then turn to her faithful friend Sikandar Hyat Khan. Perhaps the good offices and the powerful support of the Aga Khan would also be available. Nor would Fazlul Huq, the Bengal Premier, be found unwilling. Jinnah would still be left a good enough following, but then will come to him the tragic realisation, how so many of the Khan Bahadurs and Knights and titled gentry who are now dancing attendance on him, will drop away in an instant, at a sign from the British Government, whose creations they are. Jinnah would still be a notable factor, but only a factor, not the sole determinant. A Gandhi—Aga Khan—Sikandar—Fazlul Huq understanding would have a more far reaching effect than the Lucknow Pact of 1916. Jinnah would either have to toe the line, or stand in haughty aloofness, unable to change the course of history. The differences in the Muslim League would also find an echo in the Congress, where the separation of the sheep from the goats would be intensified. A new clarification of Indian politics would take place. But if, on the other hand, the international situation shows no striking change, then the present impasse will continue. The near future is full of interesting possibilities.

## JAYA PRAKASH

ON a certain day in 1933 the gates of the Nasik Road Central Prison opened to discharge a tall and distinguished looking youth, on completion of his sentence of imprisonment. I have little doubt that when the historian of the future comments on our times he will mark out that event as one of the significant happenings of the year 1933. For, with his release, a new force had emerged in Indian politics. Jayaprakash Narayan came out of prison with an idea, a purpose and a vision. And out of that was born the Congress Socialist Party.

His is to-day one of the most popular and respected names in Indian public life. But few indeed know what a magnificent personality it is that passes by the name of Jayaprakash. Fewer still suspect the widely varied experience and adventures that have gone to the making of so fascinating a man.

He has known life at first hand. Perhaps that is the reason why his thinking is so clear. When he reached America to continue his studies, he began his career not in the class-room but on a farm. He arrived in California in October 1922, to find that there were still three months for the University term to begin and he was not rich enough to keep up on his own resources. So he went out to work on a fruit farm. Large numbers:

of Indians live in California, among whom are a great many Sikhs and Pathans. Jayaprakash joined a Pathan gang whose head Sher Khan, was a picturesque figure, physically about twice the size of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. The Non-Co-operation Movement had deeply stirred Indians all over the world and any new arrival from India was an interesting figure. When it became known that Jayaprakash had left his college to join the Non-Co-operation Movement and had given up his university scholarship as a consequence, there was really no difficulty for him in finding a job.

The fruit season was then ending and Jayaprakash worked hard from morning till night amidst grapes, peaches, apricots, almonds. After they were plucked and sorted out they were treated with lime and then with sulphur. Then they were dried and sent to the factory for cleaning. Jayaprakash's work was to walk from basket to basket, throwing out bad fruit. Perhaps that is what he is doing even now—plucking out the rotten fruits from the Congress basket.

So he worked for ten hours a day and seven days in a week with no Sundays and no holidays. But the wages were attractive, forty cents an hour, which worked out at four dollars a day, and at the rate of exchange prevailing then, fourteen rupees daily. To young Jayaprakash this appeared a fabulous amount and in a month he was able to save eighty dollars. Armed with this fortune he went back to Berkeley, the fruit season having

ended, to await the opening of the University. He took a room there and did his own cooking.

One term at California and Jayaprakash was again bankrupt! So, he went up to Iowa University where tuition fees were one-fourth of those at California. Even to pay for these he worked on a peach farm.

From Iowa he next got on to Wisconsin University. Here, a new element entered into his life, an element that was to give a completely different direction to his life.

It was here that Jayaprakash's restless mind found the illumination he was groping for. He had been perplexed at the prevalence of great wealth and grinding poverty, side by side, even in America—the land of opportunity. What was the solution of this riddle? Why was it that a few had all the good things, while the vast majority were condemned to a life of squalor, poverty and ceaseless toil? A teacher of the University had declared that there was no solution to the problem of poverty, in the framework of the capitalist system, and he was known to be an ardent socialist. Jayaprakash eagerly turned to him and a great attachment grew up between the two. He started devouring the classics of Marxism and before long, but not without a powerful mental struggle, he became a confirmed socialist. His life now took on a new meaning. He gave up the sciences and turned to a study of economics. His Master's thesis was highly praised and he was considered one of the most brilliant students at

his University. He went from here to New York where he was taken seriously ill and was in a hospital for several months.

He stayed in America for nearly eight years and studied at five different Universities. He started as a student of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry and then devoted years to the study of Biology, Psychology, Economics and Sociology. He had several times interrupted his studies in order to earn enough to carry on at his University for a term or two. He had worked as a farm labourer for ten hours a day, as a packer in a jam factory, as a mechanic in an iron concern, as a waiter in a restaurant. He had tried his hand as a salesman. When, therefore, he returned to India in 1931, it was not as a raw student looking forward to a comfortable life, but as one who had seen life at close quarters and was fully determined to devote himself to public life.

Jawaharlal Nehru at once placed him in charge of the Labour Research Department of the Indian National Congress. A few months later Jayaprakash found himself Acting General Secretary of the Congress during the Civil Disobedience Movement.

History will love to remember his days of imprisonment in the Nasik Jail. Along with him were a large number of prominent Congress workers. Masani was there, so was Achyut Patwardhan.

These and other friends worked out the blue prints of the Congress Socialist Party that was to

be. In other jails, likewise, the younger sections of Congressmen dissatisfied with the decay that had crept into Congress politics, felt the need of a more dynamic orientation in the outlook and programme of the Congress and had reached Socialist conclusions.

Soon after his release, Jayaprakash organised the first session of the All India Congress Socialist Conference at Patna which met under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. The occasion was significant, for the All-India Congress Committee was meeting at the same time, to call a halt to the programme of Civil Disobedience and to launch out on Parliamentary activities. It was in the fitness of things that the Left Wing also should organise its forces to prevent this drift to the Right. Jayaprakash was elected General Secretary of the Organising Committee. In the coming months he worked ceaselessly, travelling from province to province, gathering together the radical elements and setting up Congress Socialist groups everywhere. A few months later, the All India Congress Socialist Party was formed at Bombay. Jayaprakash continued to be the General Secretary of the Party till he was made a member of the Congress Working Committee at Lucknow. He resigned from the Congress Cabinet a few months later, to resume the General Secretaryship of the Party.

Of the various leading workers of the Congress Socialist Party, Jayaprakash is most attracted by theory. But he is no dogmatist. His fingers are

firmly on the pulse of the people. He dislikes nothing so much as narrow sectarianism. If the Congress Socialist Party is something more than a political party,—a powerful movement, with a larger and larger section of the radical elements coming under its ideological influence, not a little of the credit is due to Jayaprakash.

As a writer, Jayaprakash is the master of a style that is at once simple and direct. His book, "Why Socialism?", has been acclaimed as a masterpiece and is certainly one of the finest books written on Indian affairs. As a speaker he is no orator, but by the sheer force of his sincerity and a thorough grasp of the subject he makes a greater impression than most orators.

He has two vices that I can discover. The first is the possession of a magnificent shaving set. With a beaming smile he will tell you that it is the finest in the town. When one has a face as handsome as Jayaprakash's, his may be pardoned!

I do not know how to describe the other unless I call it a lack of the time sense—for to call it merely unpunctuality, would be prosaic. The fact is, that Jayaprakash loves a good discussion, especially with an intelligent opponent, and will miss half a dozen appointments to do so. But at those times when he comes late, such genuine misery is written on his face, that he seems to endear himself all the more by his very unpunctuality !

Jayaprakash is still young. He is scarcely thirty-nine and has a fund of knowledge and experience that few people in this country can lay claim to. Gentle as he is, he can be firm and has shown that he has the courage to make big decisions. Above all, it is the human qualities of the man that cast a spell on all those who come near him. Such is Jayaprakash, unassuming, generous to a fault, honest as the day, working for a glorious to-morrow with the materials of to-day. This simple peasant lad, born in the tiny village of Sitabdiara in the Saran District of Bihar, saw a tram car for the first time when he was nineteen years old. To-day, he is one of the guiding spirits of a movement with which the future of this country is inextricably bound up.



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